

What does “Vital Record” mean?

Vital records are also called Essential Records, the records your agency needs to continue doing business in the event of a disaster. Georgia Code defines "Vital records" as “any record vital to the resumption or continuation of operations, or both; to the re-creation of the legal and financial status of government in the state; or to the protection and fulfillment of obligations to citizens of the state.” (O.C.G.A. 50-18-91 (10))

Some records series are identified in the retention schedule as “Vital Records” in order to assist the agency with the identification of such records. You should note, however, that only you can determine which records in your agency are essential to business continuity; some of them may not be identified as such in the retention schedules.

You should identify all of your Vital Records, duplicate them, and store them off-site for use in an emergency. If you make duplicates, remember that the retention period applies to the official copy of the record, not its duplicate. The duplicate records can be replaced as needed—and should be replaced frequently with the most current version of the original. You should never keep a duplicate record longer than its official original, though. When the original reaches the end of its retention period and is destroyed, destroy the duplicate copy as well.

Examples of Vital Records are: the current list of unpaid taxes, current security passwords and protocols, current contracts and leases, recent deposit records, etc.